

Family Portrait

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Summary: when parent's fight they don't just hurt themselves, but everyone around them. read as four children have to worry and work through this at home war. and try and find some hope for a better future.

Family Portrait

****Family Portrait.****

_ Mommy please stop cryin' _

_ I can't stand the sound _

_ Your pain is painful _

_ And it's tearin' me down _

Doll woke up in the middle of the night. She heard crying, but it wasn't her own or her brother's. Zero never cries. Curious, she crawled to the edge of the large bed she shared with her twin. Her feet didn't even come close to the floor, and she had to jump in order to get to the ground. She dusted herself off, not feeling the slight shock her legs should have felt from her descent to the hardwood floor. She probably should have known she was special just from the little things that herself and her brother went through, and was amazed how they didn't.

As she continued following the sounds of soft sobbing, she came to the small living room. Everything was dark, only one desk lamp was on, but it wasn't enough to bring some life into the room.

Doll walked further in, seeing the silhouette of her mother sitting against the small sofa, tears reflecting the dim light of the table lamp.

Doll felt like crying, seeing her mom like that. Just yesterday she

met her, a strong invincible warrior that protected them from the war, from anything. Seeing her cry and seem so weak was painful, and she couldn't stop her tears from falling nor the small sniffles that matched her mother.

"Doll?" her mother asked startled, "Oh, sweetie, I'm so sorry."

I hear glasses breakin'

_ As I sit up in my bed_

_ I told dad you didn't mean_

_ Those nasty things you said._

It was like this every night, this night was no different. Kappa sat up in his bed, burying his head into his knees as another glass was thrown at its victim, missing its target's face by an inch, hitting the wall behind him.

"Kappaâ€¦|" A small voice piped in after a fit of screaming and cursing coming from the kitchen.

Kappa looked up from his knees. The bright golden eyes of his little brother were filled with fear and brimmed with tears.

"Yeah, Tau?" He asked.

"I'm scared, Kappa, I don't want daddy and mommy to fight anymore," he sniffled trying not to cry.

Kappa looked down at the small three-year-old. He was too young to try and fight back the tears, just as Kappa was too young, but old enough to try. Kappa forced a smile on his face.

"Don't worry, they won't leave, they love us too much to leave," he smiled, hoping that he was telling the truth. He scooted over and patted the empty spot in his bed. "Come on, you can sleep with me," he said softly.

Tau smiled then, he pushed his stuffed bunny onto the bed, and then scrambled to get up. Once on, he cuddled up close to his older brother, and closed his eyes.

"You won't leave me right, Kappa?" Tau asked, his bunny held tight against his chest.

"I'll never leave you, Tau."

It was a few hours until the screaming died down, the door opened then slammed shut, and little Tau was fast asleep. Kappa carefully removed himself from his brother's embrace he walked out of the room to the kitchen, a short trip from their bedroom.

Leonard was sweeping up the latest mess, shaking his head and cursing silently to himself. Aware that the boys in the other room were asleep.

"Daddy," Kappa started, startling his father.

Leonard turned to face his son, sadness reflected in his eyes.

"Daddy, is mommy going to leave us?" He asked.

Leonard's heart broke, but he knew Allison wasn't going to leave. He knew, however, that he didn't have the will to keep this marriage going anymore.

"Please, daddy, don't leave us," Tau sniffled walking to the edge of the kitchen, speaking as if he had read his father's mind. "Mommy didn't mean all those mean things she said, I know she didn't," he cried.

Leonard picked Kappa and Tau up, kissed them both on the cheek and walked back to their room.

You fight about money

_ 'Bout me and my brother_

_ And this I come home to _

_ This is my shelter_

The twins came home, once again to yelling. If it wasn't in person, it was over video call. It was always the same argument as well. Mom was mad about how their father was spending their money. Their father was yelling about how the twins were needed for earth's victory in the war. Their mother would yell, scream how they were just kids, kids who have a choice.

Doll teared up again, she bowed her head so that her brother wouldn't see her cry, then ran to her room.

Zero sighed. He didn't need to see his twin's face to know she was crying, he could feel it. He was getting tired of this fight being what they came home to almost every day.

It ain't easy, growin' up in World War III

_ Never knowin' what love could be_

_ You'll see, I don't want love to destroy me _

_ Like it did my family._

Kappa envied his cousin Alice. She may have some problems with her family but it was nothing compared to his, and they always made up. They showed her compassion, -well, at least one did- and true love, not like his parents. His parents who can't seem to be pleased with anything Tau and him ever do.

He didn't want to end up like them, torn apart by fighting, where every day was a battle. Where his house wasn't a home anymore, but a battlefield. He didn't want to be the reason why Tau cried every night.

Can we work it out? (Can we?)

_ Can we be a family? (Can we?)_

_ I promise to be better (I promise)_

_ Mommy I'll do anything (I'll do anything)_

Doll saw her mother, it might be just by video but it was her only chance to see her. She wanted their family to be a family not enemies living in the same house. Her parent's constant fighting made Zero hate their father; he may not admit it, but he never treated their dad like he was virus, or a rabid dog.

Doll would promise anything to have things be normal. She'd do anything to stop all the fighting.

Can we work it out?

_ Can we be a family?_

_ I promise I'll be better_

_ Daddy, please don't leave_

Tau had grown a fear that every time the front door opened and closed, his father was leaving. He heard enough of the threats to believe that one day soon his father was going to leave them. When the door opened and closed quickly, Tau didn't know what to do, all he knew was that he needed to stop his dad from leaving them. He ran into the living room, tripping over his own feet and falling face first into the carpeted floor. Tears began to overflow, and the small boy began to cry.

Leonard ran into the living room scared half to death by the sound of his youngest son's sobs. He picked the three year old up and rocked him in his arms.

"Are you okay?" He asked.

"No," Tau cried.

"What hurts?" Leonard asked as he sat down in a chair, balancing his son on his knee.

Tau looked up at his father and wiped his eyes of any stray tears. "Here, it hurts here," he pointed to his heart.

Leonard kissed his son's hand, then patted his head. "Why did you run?"

"I thought you were leaving," Tau teared up again. "I don't want you to leave, daddy, I want us to be a real family!" he started crying again. "I'm sorry daddy, I'll be better I promise!"

Leonard couldn't say anything, he just held his son close to him, pain and guilt stabbing at his heart, just watching his little one like this, and it was torture.

Daddy please stop yelling (stop)

_ I can't stand the sound (can't stand the sound)_

_ Make momma stop cryin' _

_ Cause I need you around _

Zero couldn't stand it "he hated the man who claimed to be their father. He hated how his parent's fighting made everyone sad or pissed off, and he couldn't take it anymore. He ran to his father, punching him in the face.

"What has gotten into you, Zero?" his father demanded, trying hard to ignore the pain that shot through his cheek, and was giving him a headache.

"Stop all of this!" Zero demanded. "Stop fighting with mom, I can't take it anymore!"

His father stared at him, baffled. "I'm not the only one at fault here, your mother"

"You keep making mom cry, and Doll cries, and I'm sick of it, don't you know that this is tearing us apart". Zero cut in. "Don't you know how much we need you?"

_ My momma, she loves you (I know it) _

_ No matter what she says is true _

_ I know that she hurts you _

_ But remember I love you too _

Kappa watched from his room window, the scenes of another fight playing outside in the front yard. Tau was too scared to watch. Allison was caught, once again, with another man. She was drunk again, and Leonard was drunk too, and it was never good.

"Why can't they love each other?" Kappa asked out loud

"Mommy loves daddy right?" Tau asked.

"Yeah, but"

"Then why do mommy and daddy have to hurt each other like this?" Tau sobbed.

Kappa didn't really have answers for his younger brother, and he kept silent.

"Maybe they forgot, maybe they don't know how much this hurts us," Kappa finally answered turning away from the window.

"But I love them," Tau sniffled as his brother wrapped his arms about him.

"I know, I love them too."

_ I ran away today _

_ Ran from the noise ran away (ran away) _

_ Don't want to go back to that place_

_ But don't have no choice, no way_

The twins ran away that night. They couldn't take it anymore. The teasing at school, the neglect and war at home, they wanted to get away. So they packed their bags and left. They should have known that they wouldn't get far. Parents with the military, a Spartan and an ONI scientist. Yeah, they never had a chance, and where would they go? No one would want them.

Their father ran to them, being shrugged off by Zero, but knew Doll wouldn't shun him.

Zero looked up into his mother's eyes. He knew it was only going to be hell when they got home. The arguments would only get worse.

It ain't easy growin' up in World War III

_ Never knowing what love could be_

_ That I've seen, I don't want love to destroy me (I don't want love to destroy me)_

_ Like it did my family_

Doll didn't talk at school, didn't have friends outside of her brother. She was too afraid of being open with others. Too afraid of being hurt, of being torn apart like what happened with her parents. She didn't want to cry anymore.

Can we work it out? (Can we work it?)

_ Can we be a family?_

_ I promise I'll be better (I promise I'll do anything)_

_ Mommy, I'll do anything (to keep you better)_

Tau wondered as he ate his breakfast. It was late in the morning, and his brother was already at school, dropped off by their dad. Their mom sat down at the table to make sure Tau ate everything on his plate.

He stared into the tired eyes of his mother, and wondered if doing what he was told would make his mother happy. Maybe even happy enough to stop fighting with his father to make a real family, like the ones the triplets have, a happy normal family, or like the Grifs.

He smiled at his mom as he finished his meal. Allison smiled down at her son and took his plate away to clean, she kissed the top of his head, then handed him his bunny.

"Mommy?" he asked.

"Yes, Tau?"

"Are you happy?"

Allison paused for a moment thinking about the best way to answer that question. "Yes, Tau, I'm happy."

_ Can we work it out?_

_ Can we be a family?_

_ I promise I'll be better (I promise, I promise)_

_ Daddy please don't leave (stay)_

Doll was a daddy's girl at heart, so the constant threat of being taken away, or given away, was always a scare for her. Her twin showed no emotion; he claimed that he had already planned on joining the UNSC, and that being trained by the ONI scientists and UNSC trainers wasn't a big deal. Doll knew it was, she knew that he only wanted to be like their mother. A proud and strong Spartan, fighting for a better future.

Doll stared down the stairs, and overheard another argument between her parents. She closed her eyes, telling herself that she'll do better, she'll be better, only if her father would stay. Only if he didn't give them up. She didn't want to lose the only family she had, even though she didn't like the way it was, she didn't want to part with them.

In our family portrait (in our family portrait)

_ We look pretty happy (we look pretty happy)_

_ Let's play pretend (let's play pretend)_

_ Let's act like it comes naturally (that's right) (that's right)_

Kappa and Tau were alone at the house, their parents not yet home from work. If they knew any better, they would be more likely to see agents California or Nevada than their parents. Sometimes it felt like those two women were more of a mother than their own mom. Kappa rid himself of the thought. Tau tried not to think about it in the first place, he feared that even his thoughts would take his parents further apart.

Kappa stared into the contents of a large, dark brown wooden picture frame. He had a look of puzzlement on his face, as he looked over the picture.

"Kappa?" Tau asked as he walked to his brother, taking his hand. "What are you looking at?"

"Our family portrait," Kappa replied quickly.

"Why?"

"Because, I can't seem to find anything wrong with it," Kappa frowned.

"Is that a bad thing?" Tau asked quietly, feeling like he was getting on his brother's nerves with all his questions.

"I'm not sure. Tau, look." He pointed to their parents. "Look how happy they look, how we look."

Tau looked up at the picture and tilted his head from side to side. "Why can't they be like that now?" he asked.

Kappa wondered the same thing "why couldn't they be like that, like the portrait? Why can't they be happy like that?

_ I don't want to split the holidays (no no)_

_ I don't want two addresses (no)_

_ I don't want a stepbrother anyways_

_ And I don't want my mommy _

_ To have to change her last name!_

As talk of divorce drifted in the air of the small apartment the Church's called home, the two smallest worried more and more about their future. They didn't want to be like some of the other kids in a divorced family. They thought it was sad, having to split the holidays, living in one house one day, then maybe another the next. Tau didn't want another brother, he loved Kappa, and didn't want to be with anyone else.

Kappa hated the thought of their mother being called anything else other than Mrs. Church, they didn't want to change last names either.

In our family portrait

_ We look pretty happy_

_ We look pretty normal_

_ Lets go back to that_

It was the first time the whole family was able to take a picture together, since their mother was always off-planet, off fighting somewhere on the front lines. Doll stared at the picture after her father so carefully hung it up on the wall.

They looked so happy, so normal, the only hints of their hard life the dog tags their mother and themselves had around their necks. Of course, their father had his lab coat on; he never took it off. Overall they looked like a normal military family.

"Why can't we be like this all the time?" Doll asked.

"Because, dad puts his job before anything else," Zero sighed, shocking his sister.

Doll turned to face her twin; surely their parents could at least try, right?

"Keep dreaming of a happy family, sis, maybe once the war is over we can be like one," he shrugged. They both knew once the war was over, and if their mother lived through it, she would be put in suspended

animation until they need her again.

"Hopefully," she replied softly.

_In our family portrait _

_ We look pretty happy _

_ Let's play pretend_

_ Act like it goes naturally_

A year went by, and the arguing and fighting hadn't stopped. Kappa's birthday was ruined by their father's loud protests to their mother and other adults. Embarrassing, but not as much as Tau's first play date, if it wasn't for the fact that Mr. Caboose liked their father they probably wouldn't be able to play with Loly, and she was their first friend, they didn't want to lose her.

Day after day they would stare at their family portrait, and would imagine that they were a happy family, one without all the fighting, and all the pain.

In our family portrait

_ (Can we work it out?)_

_ We look pretty happy_

_ (Can we be a family?)_

_ We look pretty normal_

_ (I promise I'll be better)_

_ Let's go back to that_

_ (Mommy I'll do anything)_

Zero couldn't get his sister's words out of his head. He may not admit it, but he wanted things to get better. He wanted their parents to like each other, and even though they weren't married, he wanted them to get along. He would do anything to put a smile on their faces, to give his sister that normal family she had always wanted, that normal life they once had.

In our family portrait

_ (Can we work it out?)_

_ We look pretty happy_

_ (Can we be a family?)_

_ Let's play pretend_

_ (I promise I'll be better)_

_ Act like it goes naturally_

_ (Daddy, please don't leave)_

_ Oh let's go back, Oh lets go back to that._

The brothers continued to wish for better days, hoping that their parents would get along, that their mother would start loving their dad again, so that their father would stop threatening to leave. So that they could all live happily. They wanted to sit at the table for once and not have to hear them scream at each other. Kappa worried about Tau, fearing his brother would pick up the bad habits. He knew that he himself was suffering from their home battles.

In our family portrait

_ (Can we work it out?)_

_ We look pretty happy_

_ (Can we be a family?)_

_ We look pretty normal_

_ (I promise I'll be better)_

_ Let's go back to that_

_ (Mommy I'll do anything)_

Kappa loved his mother, so seeing her sad or tired hurt him. He thought that it was also his fault that his mother wasn't happy. Maybe there was something he could do to make her happy again.

"Mommy?" Kappa asked, tugging on his mother's sleeve.

Allison looked down at her seven-year-old son, the one who looked mostly like her, but had his father's eyes. She smiled softly down at him.

"Yes, Kappa?" she asked.

"Mommy, what can I do to make you happy?"

Allison stared at Kappa for a while. She kneeled down so that she was eye level with him and kissed his forehead lovingly.

"You already make me happy, Kappa, you don't need to do anything."

Even though she said that he still believed that there must be something that he could do to make her stop fighting their dad. Make her so happy she would forget why she was mad at him to start a fight.

Daddy don't leave

_ (Don't leave)_

_ Daddy don't leave_

_ (Don't leave)_

_ Daddy don't leave_

_ Daddy don't leave_

_ Daddy turn around please_

Even though it was only when their mother would be in town the twins still felt depressed when their father left. Even to the point of begging for him to stay. Doll always wanted them to be together; it wasn't like it was every day their mother came to visit in person, and there was never a time the twins could say that they spent that time as a family. Unlike soldiers of the UNSC, Spartans rarely got a break. The only reason why their mother was here was because of them.

"Dad, please, come back, it's just not a family without you," Doll cried out as she stared at her father's back.

"Give up, Doll. Dad doesn't want to be part of this family," Zero sighed irritably.

"You don't know that Zero!" Doll spat.

"He wouldn't have left if he did."

Remember that night you left

_ You took my shining star_

_ Daddy don't leave_

_ Daddy don't leave_

_ Daddy don't leave_

_ Don't leave us here alone_

Kappa and Tau could remember the day their father left. He said it was a business trip, their mother yelled at him. She threw a vase at his head. She said he was a liar, but she wasn't sober when it happened either. Leonard had had enough of his ruthless, heartless woman of a wife, he was tired of being cheated and stepped on. He saw that her only love was for the kids. So he left his wife and kids.

Kappa squeezed Tau's hand, not wanting to cry in front of his little brother. He had to be an example for Tau.

"Daddy's coming back, right?" Tau whispered, not looking his brother in the eye.

Kappa swallowed hard. "I don't know, Tau, I hope he does."

Momma'll be nicer

_ I'll tell my brother_

_ I won't spill the milk at dinner_

Tau waited for days for his father to return home, but he never did, and the longer he waited the more he felt it was his fault. That there was something he could have done to make things better, something to keep their father from leaving. They saw their mother when he left. She was broken, even though she tried to strong and hide it. She would slip every now and then, her face would drop, and they would see her tear up. She became more violent at work too, but everyone blamed O'Malley.

"Eat your veggies, Kappa," she smiled weakly, trying to put up that mask of perfection for her son.

Kappa nodded his head, then looked over to Tau. His own vegetables were untouched and he was just playing with it using his fork.

"Mom, Tau won't stop playing with his food."

Allison sighed and placed her hand on Tau's to stop him from playing with his food.

"Food is for eating not playing," she said softly.

Tau looked up at his mother, then pushed his plate away from him furiously. The plate tipped over, spilling all the food, and knocking down his milk.

"Tau!"

"It's your fault that daddy left!" Tau yelled running to his room.

I'll be so much better

_ I'll do everything right_

_ I'll be your little girl forever_

_ I'll go to sleep at night_

Maybe if she listened to her dad, maybe if she didn't spend her entire childhood trying to be like everyone else. If she was more like her twin, maybe then her dad wouldn't have left. She knew her brother cared, even though he said he didn't. He was hurt just as much as she was when their dad's ship was destroyed by the Covenant. They were both shattered when their father died.

"If only I could change things, maybe Dad wouldn't have left, wouldn't have died like that," Doll said softly, as if to not wake the dead that surrounded them in the cemetery. "I'll do anything to get him back."

Zero felt that his father got what he wanted, a life without kids. No more worries, and no angry Spartan threatening to kill him almost every day. That didn't mean that he wanted the old man gone. He felt betrayed by his father when he left, more than when he was almost killed in an experimental test.

"Dad please come back."

_ "Daddy please come home." _

End
file.